

Final Task Force Recommendations - June 4, 2001

Report of the South East Fairfax Neighborhood

Traffic Task Force

June 4, 2001

Background:

In response to City residents' concerns about the increase in speed and volume of traffic, the City of Fairfax formed neighborhood traffic task forces to formulate suggestions for improvements that would have a broad base of citizen support.

The South East Task Force met formally five times during the winter and spring of 2001, and formed a consensus on the proposed recommendations from a list of many ideas. Those recommendations proffered by the task force have been presented to the community at an outreach meeting held on May 30, 2001 at City Hall.

General Statement of the Problem:

Traffic safety of the residents of the City's neighborhoods are a primary concern that is negatively affected by large volumes of cut-through traffic attempting to escape the clogged arterial roadways. Average speeds well in excess of the posted speed limit make the neighborhood streets unsafe for pedestrians, children, and residents.

Overall Objective:

- The residential character of the neighborhoods of the City of Fairfax should be maintained by lessening average speeds and reducing traffic volume on the residential streets. The quality of life of the residents is enhanced when the main volume of through traffic is contained on the arterial roadways that pass through the jurisdiction. The public right-of-ways of the City are a valuable resource that encourages general prosperity but requires prudent control.

Specific Objectives:

- Encourage efficient and timely improvements to the arterial roadways that have minimal cost in order to encourage their use instead of cutting through the residential neighborhoods.

- Use traffic control devices (or restrictions) to enhance movement of traffic on the arterial roadways in order to encourage their use instead of cutting through the residential neighborhoods.
- Increase safety by reducing average speeds of traffic in the residential neighborhoods on the collector roads that are used as alternative routes to the arterial roadways
- Use traffic control devices (stop signs, turn restrictions, traffic signals) or traffic calming devices (speed humps or raised crosswalks) on residential streets, or through collector roadways, to lower average speeds (85th percentile) to the posted speed limit of 25 MPH.

General Improvements:

Citywide Recommendations:

- Repair malfunctioning loop detectors with priority given to repairs on arterial and major collector roads
- Adjust signal timing at loop detector controlled intersections to provide for a green signal on arterial roads when no traffic is waiting on the side street (2 seconds after last car has passed)
- Enhance police traffic enforcement activities based on traffic speed studies

Rationale: The best way to keep cut-through traffic off the neighborhood streets is by prudently improving the traffic flow on the main arterial roadways through minimal cost changes.

The task force agreed to suggest to the City a variety of main thoroughfare improvements that are both within and outside the South East area.

Rt. 123 (Chain Bridge Road)

- Prohibit parking on Northbound Rt. 123 beside library and repaint lane markings on Southbound Rt. 123 to provide a lengthened left stacking lane

- Prohibit left turn from Southbound Rt. 123 to Eastbound Rt. 236; instead sign Rt. 123 that east bound Rt. 236 traffic should turn right on North St. and left on to Rt. 236 at West St; also sign on Southbound Rt. 123 (at entrance to Fairfax County Court House) that will direct traffic to West St. for Eastbound Rt. 236
- Prohibit left turn from Northbound Rt. 123 to Westbound Warwick Ave. until 7:00 PM weekdays
- Prohibit left turn from Southbound Rt. 123 into Exxon station on southeast corner with Rt. 50
- Prohibit left turn from Exxon station on to Southbound Rt. 123

Rt. 236 (Main Street)

- Adjust signal order at intersection of Roberts Rd. and Rt. 236 to provide for a green signal for turns from Westbound Rt. 236 to Southbound Roberts Rd. at the beginning of the signal light-cycle
- Pavement mark Eastbound Rt. 236 from Farrcroft into left lane and Eastbound Rt. 236 from Roberts Rd. into right lane and provide simultaneous green for both instead of two separate cycles
- Adjust signal timing at intersection of Roberts Rd./Farrcroft and Rt. 236 to provide for a green signal on Rt. 236 when no traffic is waiting (2 seconds after last car has passed)
- Install loop detector activated signal on Northbound East St. [Old Lee Highway] to change to green for Southbound traffic when no Northbound traffic is waiting (similar to current effect at West/Main St. intersection) within normal downtown synchronization
- Integrate signal timing at Burke Station Rd. with signals at Tedrich Blvd. and Roberts Rd.
- Favor priority to Eastbound and Westbound Rt. 236 traffic until 7:00PM [rush hour cycle] and during the daytime hours [daytime business cycle]; only revert to "crossing street priority" at off-

peak hours.

Old Lee Highway

- Adjust signal timing at intersection of Willard Way and Old Lee Highway to provide for a green signal on Old Lee Highway when no traffic is waiting (2 seconds after last car has passed; synchronize timing with signal at Layton Hall Dr.
- Eliminate "walk" signal from the middle of the block of Old Lee Highway between Main St. and North St.

University Drive and Old Town Fairfax

- Priority green signal to traffic entering and leaving George Mason University at the intersection of George Mason Blvd. and University Dr.
- Relocate CUE and Metro bus stops from the narrowest section of University Dr. between Sager Ave. and North St. to a location one block away

Route 50

Adjust signal timing at intersection of Waples Mill Rd. and Rt. 50 to provide for a green signal on Rt. 50 when no traffic is waiting (2 seconds after last car has passed).

Specific Problem Area 1 - Burke Station Road:

Problems Identified:

As the Northern Virginia region has grown and developed, Fairfax City's southeastern roads have received a steady increase in cut-through traffic. Burke Station Rd. has been particularly hard-hit: Data collected by the Fairfax City police department show that more than 7,500 vehicles drove down this street in one recently monitored 24-hour period. Some 85 percent of drivers were going in excess of the posted 25 mph speed limit, and some were going more than 45 mph. The data also

show that speeding on Burke Station peaks between 3 p.m. and 6 p.m. a time when children are returning from school and playing outside. This high speed creates a particularly dangerous situation at the

intersection of Stoughton Rd. and Kirktree Ct. With a constant stream of speeding cars and trucks popping over the blind hill, it is difficult to turn onto Burke Station from Stoughton, Kirktree, Sharon Ct., and Barbara Ann Ln. There have been several incidents in which small children were almost hit, and residents report having had pets

injured and killed in this section. Burke Station also gets many large commercial trucks, including an occasional oil tanker from the tank farm on Pickett Rd. Neighbors who live directly on Burke Station complain that tractor trailers roar by as early as three and four a.m., rattling and shaking their homes. Large trucks speeding down a residential street in which young children, pets, and pedestrians are about is not a safe situation. Residents along Burke Station and all of its side streets (Stonewall Avenue, Stoughton, Cresence Way, Crestar Ct., Kirktree, Sharon Ct., Barbara Ann, and Mosby Rd.) were canvassed twice by members of the task force. In addition, an open community meeting was held at the home of task force member Susan Barborek. Neighbors expressed deep concern about the problems on Burke Station and strongly supported the task force's proposals.

Proposed Actions:

1) Installation of sidewalks along Burke Station from Sharon Ct. to the county line at Laurel St., combined with at least three raised pedestrian crosswalks (stamped, painted asphalt to resemble brick pavers) placed at Mosby Rd., Barbara Ann Ln., and Kirktree Ct.

Rationale: Currently, there is no safe place for schoolchildren to cross the street to their bus stops, and pedestrians can not walk along the street because of open ditches and the lack of a sidewalk. The raised crosswalk would also slow traffic. (Studies conducted by Portland, Oregon, show that raised pedestrian crosswalks effectively slow traffic to around 25 mph. See <http://www.trans.ci.portland.or.us>)

2) A ban on through truck traffic, with signs to be placed at the intersection of Burke Station and Main St. and with Fairfax County's agreement at the intersection of Burke Station and Braddock Rd.

Rationale: Through commercial traffic endangers the residents of Burke Station Rd. Other nearby streets (including Roberts Rd., Virginia St., and Orchard Dr.) already have truck bans in place. The city should do no less to protect the residents of Burke Station.

3) Improvements to the intersection of Burke Station and Main St., including repainting faded lane lines, a painted pedestrian crosswalk, and covering the ditch along the west side of the street (i.e., the frontage of Little River Veterinary Clinic, 4000 Burke Station Rd.).

Rationale: These conditions constitute safety hazards and visual blight.

- 4) Installation of two to three speed-humps on Stonewall Avenue.

Rationale: Residents complain that pass-through drivers speed down their lane, and that a nearby transmission shop uses this street to test-drive repaired cars.

A petition signed by over 80% of the effected residents of this area has been provided to the City staff under separate cover. This is indicative of the broad support for the recommendations.

Specific Problem Area 2 - Green Acres:

Problems Identified:

Traffic speeds are excessive in the one block segment of Barbour Dr. and on Sideburn between Armstrong and Courthouse, causing many near misses by drivers attempting to turn from Berritt onto either of the streets.

Proposed Actions:

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- 1) Key to managing the traffic in the Green Acres neighborhood is the expedited completion of George Mason Boulevard from George Mason University to the already constructed section in Crestmont, and to the traffic signal at Armstrong Street. The existing University Drive should be closed at the southern City boundary.

Rationale: This has been a high priority item for the neighborhood residents for many years and the City should move ahead on an expedited basis with negotiations with Fairfax County to relocate activities at the Eleven Oaks School site to another location outside of the neighborhood. This will permit a favorable roadway and timely construction and significantly improve the quality of life in the area.

- 2) Install an all-way-stop (4 way) at intersection of Berritt, Courthouse, Sideburn and Barbour

Rationale: Currently this is the only intersection in the northern portion of the Barbour-Sideburn Rd. corridor that does not have an all way stop. Safety has been substantially increased at other locations on this street through the prudent use of this traffic control device. An informal canvas of the residents of the affected area indicates broad support for this recommendation.

2) Do Not Cover Stop Signs in Green Acres during City special events

Rationale: Covering the stop signs makes the neighborhood streets more dangerous for pedestrians, as drivers unfamiliar with the neighborhood attempt to speed to go around the City event.

Specific Problem Area 3 - Halemhurst Neighborhood:

Problems Identified:

Traffic speeds and volumes are excessive on Orchard Dr., Dwight Ave., and Virginia St. primarily caused by drivers trying to avoid traffic signal at Main St. and Roberts Rd. and the speed humps on Roberts Rd. The traffic light at Roberts and 236 was installed in conjunction with the Farrcroft development.

Between 1997 and 2000 the change in daily (Tuesday) volume was dramatic. On Virginia St. 957 more vehicles indicated a 100% increase, while on Roberts Rd. there were 1010 fewer vehicles, a 27% decrease.

In addition, traffic safety is jeopardized by vehicles attempting to go westbound on Main St. from either Virginia St. or Orchard Dr. because these intersections are not signalized.

Proposed Actions:

1) The City should write a letter to GMU explaining our concerns about speeding and traffic cutting through our neighborhoods and ask them to educate/inform the student body of the primary traffic arteries they should/could be using.

Rationale: Education is the best strategy to encourage GMU related traffic to use Braddock Rd.

2) The Roberts Rd. traffic light on Main St. does not switch to the nighttime blinking yellow (smooth flow on Main) because of sight-line concerns. We'd like the sensing loop repaired on Roberts and Farrcroft so that the Main St. traffic flow need only be interrupted when there is traffic waiting for an extended time on Roberts (and/or Farrcroft).

Rationale: All the other traffic signals on Main St. from Old Town Fairfax to Pickett Rd. are on the blinking yellow cycle after 10:00 P.M. Repairing the signal so it will not interrupt the flow of traffic on Main St. during the off peak hours (10:00PM to 6:00 AM) will keep traffic on Main St.

3) We would like the city staff to review and formulate the actual signage changes as follows:

- Main WB & Orchard sign 'No Outlet';
- Orchard SB & Dwight sign 'No Right Turn' (5:00 PM to 7:00 PM);
- Main WB & Virginia sign 'No Left Turn' (5:00 PM to 7:00 PM);
- Roberts NB & Dwight sign 'No Right Turn' (5:00 AM to 8:00 AM);

Rationale: This will substantially improve the safety of the neighborhood, particularly for traffic that must turn west on Main St.

When the latest city traffic volume data and a reasonable description of what could be done has been determined, we would like the city to send out that information with directions to contact this task force (or a subgroup) with suggestions or objections. Based on people's response we (the task force) can then have a neighborhood meeting to discuss the details.

Summary:

Based on the outreach activities of the task force members we believe that there is broad support for the recommendations identified in this report. The City Council should take prompt action to direct the City staff to present a plan for implementation on an expedited basis.

For The South East Traffic Task Force:

Andrew H. Werthmann

Chairman

Attachment: Roster of Task Force Members